

Racial Slur, 'The Idiot's Guide to Kama Sutra' Led to Chaplain's Firing, Says Wheaton College

The Rev. Tim Blackmon allegedly referred to a colleague repeatedly by a racial slur and had *The Idiot's Guide to Kama Sutra* left on a female colleague's desk while he was chaplain at Wheaton College.

Those are among the allegations that led to Blackmon's firing late last month, according to a statement Wheaton provided to Religion News Service early Thursday morning (July 9).

Wheaton, an evangelical flagship school in suburban Chicago, initially declined to comment on the details of Blackmon's firing, referring only to "inappropriate comments and actions of a racial and sexual nature" that the former chaplain made toward other staff.

The college's written statement comes in response to what it called Blackmon's "recent public attempts to exonerate his behavior and suggest that the College has treated him unfairly."

Before Wheaton wrote its statement, the attorney's office for Blackmon had contacted RNS and other news outlets with a statement in which the former chaplain said he was "completely blind-sided" by the school's investigation.

"During my five-year tenure as chaplain, I strived to lead and preach with the highest levels of integrity, accountability and honesty. I have been and remain committed to racial and gender equity and safety," he said.

Blackmon pinned the investigation on “a handful of injudicious comments” he said he made in public to coworkers in 2015 and 2016. Some of his comments were “taken completely out of their factual and, in some cases, religious context,” he said, and nobody had communicated their offense or discomfort with him at the time.

The former chaplain also claimed the same colleague who filed the complaint against him had previously complained to the college about articles Blackmon had shared that the person “deemed ideologically problematic.”

In his statement, Blackmon praised Wheaton as a “vibrant community” where students “navigate sexuality and race and other important matters in a deeply Christian and intellectually rigorous way.”

“Coming from the Netherlands in 2015, I felt my Dutch directness and no-nonsense style, in the context of a gospel-shaped life and ministry, would uniquely position me to tackle these issues head-on at Wheaton,” he said. “I was saddened to learn my approach and banter were considered offensive and escalated to my termination.”

Blackmon, who was raised in the Netherlands, became the sixth chaplain of Wheaton College in 2015.

The college’s investigation into his comments and actions reportedly ended in April after more than four months, and Blackmon was fired on May 26. News of his dismissal was announced over the weekend in an email to the college community by Wheaton President Philip Ryken.

The former chaplain is now considering legal action against Wheaton, he said. {eo}

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